

the sight of God. "Bring no more vain oblations," saith the prophet Isaiah; "incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting."^{*} But hypocritical professors are not merely unprofitable, they are injurious. They are tares among the wheat: like briars and thorns in the midst of a cultivated and fruitful field: they encumber the ground, and occupy a place which might be filled up with greater advantage by others. They impoverish the soil, they withdraw the support and nourishment provided for the fruitful trees; and yet, they derive no advantage to themselves. "They shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for they neither go in themselves, neither suffer those that are entering to go in." They bring reproach upon the religion they profess; they grieve the hearts of sincere Christians; and render open transgressors, more daring and outrageous. It is difficult to find language sufficiently strong and forcible, to delineate their character, and expose their baseness and treachery. "These," saith Jude, "are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."[†] Is this the character of the hypocritical professor, and ought you not to inquire, whether or not the description applies to yourselves? You enjoy the ordinances of religion in great abundance, you are often warned and admonished, invited and entreated to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore, you must be either sincere Christians or empty hypocrites. It remains with you to determine this important enquiry. You can ascertain your progress in the arts and sciences—by examining your

* Isaiah i. 13. † Jude 12, 13.